

EJ News

A newsletter from the New England Environmental Justice Council

Quarterly, First Edition

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EPA NE rolls out Environmental Justice Plan

EPA New England has a long and successful history of addressing issues related to environmental justice (EJ). With the recent appointment of regional administrator Bob Varney, the region gained the knowledge, support, energy, and new ideals of someone with a history of commitment to this issue.

Soon after Varney's arrival, the EPA New England EJ Council briefed the office directors and regional administrator on past successes and efforts over the last 18 months to develop an EJ Action Plan, which would help institutionalize EJ in the everyday

work of the agency. Varney praised the council and challenged it to do even better.

Today we are seeing the results -- a new Environmental Justice Action Plan that lays out a clear agenda for EPA staff and external partners to boost EJ

In this issue

***An EJ success story**

***EJ council and leadership**

***EJ Grants**

***Message from EPA Administrator Whitman**

***National EJ Strategy**

activities all across New England.

The EJ Action Plan being rolled out today is the next step in our continuing efforts to institutionalize EJ in the region over the next two years. Strategies were developed around six themes:

- Develop program-specific EJ guidance in areas such as enforcement and inspections, permitting, grants, performance partnership agreements, state delegated programs and public participation.

- Educate and train all EPA staff so they understand EJ, and provide them with tools to identify EJ communities of concern and

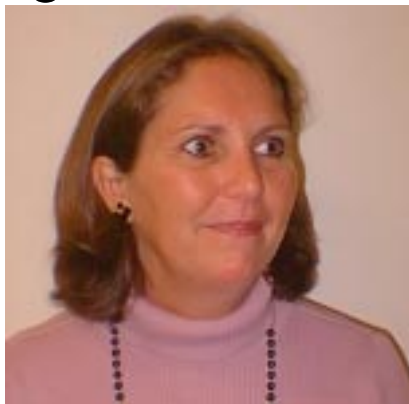
continued on page 2

Castagna takes job as EJ Coordinator

Kathleen Castagna, a 21-year EPA veteran, is the region's new Environmental Justice Coordinator, a position in the Office of Civil Rights and Urban Affairs in EPA New England's Office of the Regional Administrator.

"The role of the EJ Coordinator is two-pronged," Castagna said. "Internally you have responsibility for integrating EJ into the regions programs and policies, and externally you have to be responsive to communities that raise concerns."

Castagna formerly worked in the Office of Site Remediation and Restoration, home of the Superfund program, where she



was a regional project officer for RCRA Enforcement and Permitting Assistance Contracts. She also recently served as assistant to the director of Civil Rights and Urban Affairs and as the Federal Women's Program manager.

Her last two decades of

experience with EPA gave her experience in many areas, with an emphasis on program and policy development, project management, environmental evaluation, community consensus-building and team-leading skills.

"I am most excited about working with communities and serving as the EPA representative when a community group raises a concern," said Castagna. "I grew up in an urban area and didn't have access to clean beaches, parks or air, and I committed early in my life to environmental issues because of that."

Kathleen Castagna can be reached at 617-918-1429.

EJ Council will take lead on action

EPA New England created the Environmental Justice Council in 1999, with a mission of institutionalizing environmental justice throughout the office.

The goal was ensure that environmental justice is considered when the region sets its priorities each year and to help incorporate EJ into the region's day-to-day activities. The council will use the Action Plan announced today to achieve these goals.

EPA New England's Environmental Justice Council is made up of the deputy office directors and support staff from

the region's six program and administrative offices. The council is chaired by the director of the Office of Civil Rights and Urban Affairs, **James Younger**, who has overall management accountability for ensuring that EJ is institutionalized throughout the organization.

Members of the council are: from the **Office of Ecosystem Protection**: Susan Studlien, Marv Rosenstein and Lois Adams; from the **Office of Site Remediation and Restoration**: Rich Cavagnero, Michael Barry, Edgar Davis and Athanasios Hatzopoulos; from the **Office of Environmental Stewardship**:

Gerry Levy, Veronica Harrington, Rhona Julien and Hugh Martinez; from the **Office of Environmental Measurement and Evaluation**: Carol Wood and Rich Fisher; from the **Office of Administration and Resource Management**: James Owens and Deborah Cohen; from the **Office of Civil Rights and Urban Affairs**: James Younger, Kathleen Castagna; Natasha Greaves and Davina Wysin; from the **Office of Regional Counsel**: Pam Hill. In addition, a representative from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry has a seat on the council.

New environmental justice plan goes even further

continued from page 1

factor EJ into their everyday work.

- Engage community-based and health organizations, and federal, state and local government, to collectively broaden efforts to understand, identify, and resolve EJ concerns, and to meaningfully involve these partners in the region's decision-making.

- Create an inventory of EJ projects, programs, initiatives and activities, and make it available electronically to all staff.

- Increase communication with both internal staff and outside stakeholders through the use of the internet and newsletters.

- Include EJ in the annual strategic planning process for the 2002 fiscal year and beyond.

At the same time as the council is releasing this plan, Varney has issued a revised EJ policy that will set the framework and direction for putting in place the aggressive strategies contained in the plan. The goal, ultimately, is to ensure that all the citizens of New England receive fair and equal environmental protection regardless of their race or income status.

EPA New England was the first region in the country to issue an EJ Policy and Implementation Plan, and to map EJ areas of concern. All this happened in New England in the early 1990s, as the

organization made progress in changing its culture to emphasize its relationships and connections to citizens and communities in New England who are most in need of environmental protection.

EJ efforts focus on asthma, children's health

As part of its work on EJ, EPA New England has made a commitment to protect the health and environments of children, particularly those living in low income and minority communities.

Among the priorities of the region's Children's First program is tackling the triggers of asthma, a disease that disproportionately affects children in low income urban areas. As a founding member of the New England Regional Asthma Coordinating Council, EPA New England helped develop a 12-point plan to reduce the incidence of asthma in the region.

EPA New England's lead safe yards program focuses on reducing lead contamination in soil and homes, and the Healthy Schools agenda works to improve school environments for students. For more information on Children First, visit <http://www.epa.gov/region1/children/index.html>.

An EJ success story

EPA and partners reduce threat of lead

Although children's blood lead levels have declined dramatically in recent years, lead continues to threaten children's health—especially in Boston where much of the older housing stock contains lead-based paint. The greatest threat may lurk outside of homes—in yards where children play.

This concern has spurred EPA to test and clean more than 100 backyards in Boston's Dudley and Bowdoin neighborhoods since 1998 through the Lead-Safe Yard Project.

Lead poisoning can cause permanent damage to the brain, kidneys and nervous system. Even low levels of lead can slow a young child's development and cause learning and behavior problems. Lead-based paint on older housing is the main source of lead poisoning in Massachusetts, and the Mass. Department of Public Health reports that in communities with the highest risk of childhood lead poisoning, 63 percent of the housing was built prior to 1950.

EPA's lead-safe yards program, launched in 1998, offers low- and no-cost techniques that significantly reduce exposure risks for preschool children to lead in soil. The project is funded through the EPA's Environmental Monitoring for Public Access and Community Tracking program, and the EPA worked with local government, several community-



Bowdoin Street Community Health Center conducts outreach in the neighborhood

based organizations, a university, and a couple of landscaping companies to carry out the project.

The project targeted the neighborhoods surrounding Bowdoin and Dudley Streets in the North Dorchester and Roxbury areas of Boston. These communities are on the "lead belt" of Boston, home to most of the children with elevated blood levels. Both neighborhoods are primarily made up of low-income African-American, Hispanic, and Cape Verdean residents.

EPA partnered with Boston's Department of Neighborhood Development, the Bowdoin Street Community Health Center and the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative to choose blocks that contained mostly older wood-framed houses, and to conduct

outreach, education, safety training, sampling and analysis efforts. So far, 100 properties have been tested and cleaned of elevated levels of lead in soil.

The project has raised residents' awareness of the hazards of lead poisoning and educated them about the childhood health risks posed by lead in soil. The project has also shown that simple steps can be taken inside and outside the home to alleviate risks of exposure to lead paint.

In addition, project staff worked with the Boston University School of Public Health to develop a model for other communities to abate lead contamination in their own yards. The project has sponsored a technology transfer training

continued on Page 8

Varney has a history of commitment to justice

Bob Varney grew up in the homogenous suburbs of Massachusetts. That, however, didn't prevent his growing interest in those who face discrimination.

While in high school, Bob Varney took a class in black literature, which introduced him to books about civil rights, race and discrimination. Later, he studied urban planning, where issues of equity and justice were central to the curriculum.

As commissioner of the NH Department of Environmental Services, Varney in 1994 made New Hampshire the first state in the country to establish an environmental justice policy. At the same time, he urged EPA New England to become more aggressive in addressing EJ issues. His leadership was recognized when EPA invited him to join the national Environmental Justice Advisory Council, where he served until his appointment at EPA New England.

And now, as regional administrator of EPA New England, Varney is committed to making sure that environmental justice is a central consideration in all EPA's policies and actions.

"It has always been important to me," said Varney, who co-chaired a national meeting in Nashville, Tenn. in 1999 that brought together EJ activists and state environmental officials from around the country.

Although EPA New England's Environmental Justice Council was formed before Varney started at EPA New England, the new RA has fueled



the effort.

"I made it known I was interested in seeing us accelerate our efforts in environmental justice," said Varney, who had to give up his seat on the National EJ Advisory Committee when he became RA.

From Varney's point of view, environmental justice means ensuring that "no people suffer from a disparate impact on their environment."

This includes not only making sure that people of minority backgrounds are protected, but also that low income people are protected. And, he adds, the issue is rural, as well as urban.

The new EJ action plan will address how environmental justice will be handled at EPA New England in the coming two years.

"Number one is to increase awareness among staff," he said. "We want to make sure every employee, from the receptionist to the Regional Administrator, has EJ training so we understand it's an issue and a concern and how we can factor it into our daily

activities."

Key to this effort will be enhanced outreach, Varney said. This will ensure all residents of New England have a say and an opportunity "not only to voice their concerns, but to have their concerns factored into the decision-making process."

As an example of how EJ will become a priority, Varney noted EJ communities will get added consideration when considering a cleanup action, or a brownfields development, for instance.

Achieving environmental justice must involve the states, as well. It will be EPA New England's job to make sure all states know EJ is a central priority for us and to encourage them to make it one for them. Many already include EJ missions in their agreements with EPA, Varney noted. Although the goal of EJ is to equitably distribute environmental impacts and protections, Varney said the central issue is really justice, which is about far more than the environment.

"It's the issue of disparate impact," or inequality, he said. "It can come into play in almost any issue - making sure all communities have adequate medical services, education, police protection and community investment. Justice is certainly a broad issue and EJ is only one part of that, but we need to do our part to ensure low income people and minorities do not suffer from a disparate impact in our society."

EPA announces this year's EJ grantees

Seven grants totaling \$100,000 have been awarded through the Environmental Justice Small Grants program to community groups throughout New England. This year's grants focus on public health projects and those that address how environmental information is made available in minority/low income communities. Six of the EJSG grantees received \$15,000 each and one grantee, "Keep Providence Beautiful/ Groundwork Providence," received \$10,000.

Awardees include:

Action for Boston Community Development Healthy Homes/Healthy Kids.

This project addresses inextricably linked housing and health problems among Boston's two largest non-English speaking immigrant groups, Haitians and Latinos, in Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan.

Nuestra Comunidad Development Corp. - Swifty Auto Mall Environmental Education and Prototype Project.

This project aims to show that the auto service industry can be environmentally-friendly and economically viable. The project targets Roxbury where there are over 35 auto-related businesses within one mile of the renovated building site of Swifty Auto Mall, and where levels of cancer, heart-related problems, and asthma are among the highest in Boston.

The Way Home - Community Organizing for Environmentally Safe Housing.

The purpose of this project is to increase Manchester, New Hampshire's stock of affordable, lead-safe housing in order to reduce environmental hazards to



Keep Providence Beautiful volunteers clean Waverly Street through an EJSG in 1999

children from low-income families.

The Food Project - Urban Agriculture and Capacity Building.

Through this grant, the Food Project's youth, staff, and community members will work through their urban agriculture program to educate peer organizations and participants at local and regional conferences about the connections between healthy food, healthy land, and healthy communities, and will increase organic food production in its urban agriculture program by 30 percent.

Chelsea Human Services Collaborative - Chelsea Green Space and Recreation Committee.

This project will address the severe truck traffic problem that is a major contributor to the soaring asthma and respiratory illnesses in Chelsea. The Green Space project plans to involve 750 people in its traffic reduction campaign.

Maine Lead Action Project- Healthy Children, Healthy Communities.

The MLAP will partner with three existing Healthy Communities/ Communities for Children

coalitions in Houlton, Bath, and Rumford to develop prevention and education intervention campaigns targeting low-income, high-risk populations.

Keep Providence Beautiful/ Groundwork Providence - Environmental Education Outreach Program.

This project was designed to help residents and community groups in Providence's racially diverse West End neighborhood to identify and assess environmental risks and pollution sources in the community; devise strategies for environmental improvements; and provide education, information, and training on crucial environmental and public health issues.

In addition to these seven grants, an **Environmental Justice Through Pollution Prevention Grant** in the amount of \$75,000 has been awarded to the **Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice** to support their **Diesel Information and Education Simply to Extend Life (DIESEL) Bus Project**.

Through this project the CCEJ will address the disproportionate

continued on page 7

From the EPA Administrator: "We are committed to EJ"

The Environmental Protection Agency has a firm commitment to the issue of environmental justice and its integration into all programs, policies, and activities, consistent with existing environmental laws and their implementing regulations.

The agency defines environmental justice to mean the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws and policies, and their meaningful involvement in the decisionmaking processes of the government. Among other things, this requires the following:

(a) Conducting our programs, policies, and activities that substantially affect human health and the environment in a manner that ensures the fair treatment of all people, including minority populations and/or low-income populations;

(b) Ensuring equal enforcement of protective environmental laws for all people, including minority populations and/or low-income populations;

(c) Ensuring greater public participation in the agency's development and implementation of environmental regulations and policies; and

(d) Improving research and data collection for agency programs relating to the health of, and the environment of all people, including minority populations and/or low-income populations.

In sum, environmental justice is the goal to be achieved for all communities and persons across this nation. Environmental justice is achieved when everyone, regardless of race, culture, or income, enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the



decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work.

The purpose of this memorandum is to ensure your continued support and commitment in administering environmental laws and their implementing regulations to assure that environmental justice is, in fact, secured for all communities and persons. Environmental statutes provide many opportunities to address environmental risks and hazards in minority communities and/or low-income communities. Application

States, feds have EJ agendas

Three of the six New England states - New Hampshire, Connecticut and Massachusetts - have Environmental Justice policies in place, and others are working on them. In addition, EPA and the New England State Environmental Commissioners are having ongoing discussions on EJ through the Environmental Justice/ Title VI Work Group. This group meets twice a year to identify EJ issues and share information on EJ in New England.

The group is now focusing on EJ mapping tools, training,

of these existing statutory provisions is an important part of this agency's effort to prevent those communities from being subject to disproportionately high and adverse impacts, and environmental effects.

In the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Congress could not have been any clearer when it stated that it shall be the continuing responsibility of the Federal government to assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings.

Integration of environmental justice into the programs, policies, and activities via Headquarters/ Regional Office Memoranda of Agreements and Regional Office/ State Performance Partnership Agreements is an Agency priority. The Director of the Office of Environmental Justice, Barry E. Hill, and his staff are available to assist you. Barry Hill can be reached at (202)564-2515.

I am positive that each of you will join me in working to secure environmental justice for all communities.

-Christie Todd Whitman

coordinating with the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC), state/EPA partnerships, assessing risk in communities of concern. Massachusetts has developed cumulative risk guidance and site assessment regulations that are now under review.

This month EPA New England sponsored a Pilot Environmental Justice Training Program for state agencies and other outside groups involved in EJ. The course was developed by

continued on page 7

Barry Hill, director of EPA's EJ Office, outlines priorities

In July, Barry E. Hill, the Director of the national Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ), shared the EPA's national priorities for the 2002 fiscal year with the regional offices. Through a memorandum Hill stressed that OEJ plans to work closely with each of the 10 regions over the coming year to provide comprehensive guidance to assess and address allegations of environmental injustice.

"The whole is equal to the sum of its parts," said Hill, explaining why OEJ will focus on regional outreach in order to achieve its ultimate goal for the EPA's national and regional environmental justice programs to be both consistent and well-coordinated.

Many of OEJ's priorities for the 2002 fiscal year are similar to EPA New England's, as outlined in the EJ Action Plan being released today, including the focus on guidance, training, mapping, alternative dispute resolution, and most importantly—the integration of environmental justice into EPA's programs, policies and activities. Below are some highlights of OEJ's priorities for the coming year:

- Support the Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice in developing 15 new model projects to address environmental justice through cooperation among federal agencies.

- Pursue the release of OEJ's "Guidance for Addressing and Assessing Allegations of Environmental Injustice" for public comment. The document provides information to help EPA personnel understand the manifestations of environmental justice and to address them in practical terms.

- Press for the public release of the complete Environmental

Justice Mapper, which includes EPA environmental and compliance data, health data from the Department of Health and Human services, census data, and links to Occupational Safety and Health Administration data. The complete system is available to all EPA personnel via the intranet, and another version is available to the public on the internet that does not include compliance information. The full public system is being held up because of inaccuracy of the compliance data.

- Continue to promote the use of alternative dispute resolution by helping regions identify appropriate opportunities for its use.

- Foster the integration of environmental justice into the EPA's programs, policies, and activities through cooperative

agreements with the National Academy of Public Administrators and the Environmental Law Institute, which will issue reports in December on environmental justice integration in permitting programs and on other environmental statutes.

- Work with the Training Collaborative program to develop, for example, modules for the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Clean Water Act permitting programs.

- Provide direction to the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC) to provide cogent and timely recommendations, and to ensure that program offices work effectively with NEJAC subcommittees.

On the state and national scene

continued from page 6

the EJ Training Collaborative, which has been traveling across the country soliciting input in developing a "Fundamentals of Environmental Justice" course.

On the national front, the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC), a federal advisory committee to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, has begun work to sharpen EPA's effectiveness when working on EJ.

The NEJAC Executive Council met in August to assess its progress and mission. The executive council decided to focus on two areas:

- *improving community participation for residents who are poor and people of color in the EJ dialogue, and

- *assisting communities in articulating their concerns relative

to specific sites.

The executive council will develop a strategic plan for NEJAC over the next few months. The next NEJAC meeting is Dec. 3 to 6 in Seattle. The meeting will focus on subsistence aquatic consumption patterns and the relationship to EPA water quality standards.

Grants for EJ

continued from page 5

amount of diesel bus emission that the elderly and schoolchildren are exposed to.

Each of these grantees was selected through a competitive grants process. Applications were selected by a grant review panel consisting of representatives from each of the EPA New England offices. Recommendations of the best applications were made to the regional administrator who made the final selections.

Lead-Safe Yards Program brings justice into EPA work

continued from page 4
program, prepared a "how to" handbook that provides technical information for soil lead abatement, and conducted seminars to provide guidance to other interested community organizers throughout the country.

So far, the state of Rhode Island and the Syracuse community have initiated their own Lead-Safe Yard Programs and other communities are interested in similar lead-safe projects.

Over three years, the project has been active, EPA and its partners have collaborated to reduce lead problems in buildings and soil and to ultimately make residences completely lead-safe.



Sampling with the Niton 702 XRF to collect real-time soil lead data

Where and how to get more EJ info

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Web Resources

EPA New England Environmental Justice Program website
<http://www.epa.gov/region1/steward/ejprog/index.html>

EPA New England Environmental Justice Grants Program
<http://www.epa.gov/region1/steward/ej/index.html>

National Office of Environmental Justice
<http://es.epa.gov/oeca/main/ej/index.html>

National Environmental Justice Advisory Council
<http://es.epa.gov/oeca/main/ej/nejac/index.html>

National Office of Civil Rights
<http://www.epa.gov/ocrpage1/aboutocr.htm>

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